Daily Report

Latin America

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Cuba

Jaime Crombet Meets With Najibullah in Kabul

FL2704132388 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] In Kabul Afghan President Najibullah has received the Cuban delegation attending the festivities marking the 10th anniversary of the Afghan revolution.

The Cuban delegation is headed by Jaime Crombet, secretary of the PCC Central Committee. Crombet conveyed a greeting from Commander in Chief Fidel Castro to the Afghan leader, who reciprocated the gesture.

The Afghan process was discussed during the meeting.

Roberto Veiga Speaks at 1 May Planning Meeting

FL2704143388 Havana Tele-Rebelde Network in Spanish 1228 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] An important meeting was held in Havana to finalize the details for the march of the combatant people. Among the speakers were Roberto Veiga, member of the PCC Politburo and secretary general of the CTC [Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions], and Jorge Lezcano Perez, first secretary of the party in Havana.

In his closing remarks, Comrade Veiga said that 1 May will be a new expression of the people's revolutionary affirmation. The advancements made in the rectification process are comforting and indicate that we have embarked on the correct road, he said.

Nevertheless, added Veiga, those advancements mean new and greater commitments for the workers. This has strengthened their conviction that they are able to confront and resolve the numerous deficiencies and limitations that exist, said the CTC secretary general.

Talks Held With Angola on Construction Aid

FL2704151988 Havana Tele-Rebelde Network in Spanish 1230 GMT Apr 88

[Text] Angolan and Cuban officials have held talks in Havana during which increased cooperation was requested for the development of construction and the materials industry in Angola.

Planning Minister Antonio Henriques da Silva and National Bank Governor Antonio da Silva Inacio represented Angola at the talks. The Angolan officials reviewed the 1988 bank and intergovernmental agreements.

Cuba was represented by Construction Materials Minister Levi Farah and Oscar Rodriguez, president of the corporation [as heard].

Among the topics analyzed were the coastal protection of the Landana zone, the (Bucasao) steelworks, and the completion and urbanization of the (Golfo) suburb.

Mozambican President Meets Justice Minister

FL2604180588 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] In Maputo Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano has received Cuban Justice Minister Juan Escalona. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations, particularly in the field of justice.

The Cuban minister traveled to Mozambique at the invitation of his counterpart to exchange expertise in the legal field.

Argentine Group in Havana for Trade Meeting

FL2504232088 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2140 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] The second meeting of the Cuban-Argentine joint commission on foreign trade began today in Havana. The commission will examine trade relations and ways in which to increase trade between the two countries.

The delegation is headed by (Dr Daniel Berdut), Argentine foreign trade under secretary, and is composed of officials from the Secretariat of Industry and Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Worship. The South American delegation will meet with members of the Cuban Government and tour centers of scientific interest, among other places.

Officials Meet Malmierca

FL2604134588 Havana Radio Reloj Network in Spanish 0202 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] In Havana Isidoro Malmierca, member of the PCC Central Committee and minister of foreign relations, has received Dr Alberto Ferrari, Argentine under secretary for Latin American affairs.

They discussed international and bilateral topics of mutual interest. Present at the meeting were Vice Minister [of Foreign Relations] Ricardo Alarcon and other officials from the two countries.

Mr Alberto Ferrari and Alarcon later opened the second Cuban-Argentine joint commission on foreign trade, which will end on 27 April.

The Cuban vice minister welcomed the Argentine delegation. He emphasized the importance for Latin American countries at this time of trading in all sectors as part of Latin American integration.

Ferrari, for his part, thanked Alarcon for his remarks.

CTC Official Attends Solidarity Event in Panama

FL2604165088 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] Rene Penalver, second secretary general of the CTC [Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions], has traveled to Panama to participate in an international trade union meeting expressing solidarity with Panama. The forum will be held from 28 to 30 April and it will be attended by the principal workers' organizations of the world.

Comments on Message

FL2704033588 Havana Television Service in Spanish 0000 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Interview with Rene Penalver, second secretary general of the CTC and head of the Cuban delegation to an international trade union meeting in Panama, and Ibrahin Zacarias, secretary general of the WFTU, by Nelson Notario Castro and Emilio Regalado, special Cuban television correspondents, in Panama City; date not given—recorded]

[Text] [Notario Castro] Penalver, do you have a message from the Cuban workers for the Panamanian people?

[Penalver] Well, the message I bring is one of total support for the just cause of the Panamanian people. This is the message of our working class, our workers, which will be expressed in this union meeting to prevent in every way possible, with this solidarity, the attacks, prepotence, and usurpation the United States wants to maintain against the Panamanian people.

[Notario Castro] Will the Cuban workers movement use some type of international forum to denounce U.S. Yankee aggression against Panama?

[Penalver] Well, we will use this forum, which, as a matter of fact, begins the day after tomorrow. Furthermore, May Day in Cuba will be an expression of our people's will, of revolutionary reaffirmation. Once again on this occasion the workers will express as one of their main slogans the support for the heroic struggle of the Panamanian people. In the same manner, on 3 May we will have a meeting with the 60 foreign delegations participating in the May Day activities in Havana, which is precisely geared toward expressing solidarity with the Panamanian people.

[Notario Castro] Mr Zacarias, what message do you have from the workers of the world for the Panamanians?

[Zacarias, in English with consecutive translation into Spanish] We have a message of solidarity, a message of committed solidarity. In these moments when the Panamanian people and workers are facing aggression from the United States, we feel it is our duty as representatives of the international trade union movement to extend our solidarity and to stand firm beside the workers and people of Panama.

U.S. 'Intervention' Rapped

FL2804024488 Havana Television Service in Spanish 0000 GMT 28 Apr 88

[Interview with Roberto Prieto, coordination secretary of the Permanent Congress for the Labor Unity of Latin American and Caribbean Workers (CPUSTAL), by an unidentified Cuban television reporter in Panama City; date not given — recorded]

[Text] [Reporter] What is the militant solidarity of area workers with the Panamanians?

[Prieto] We are representing CPUSTAL together with Comrade Francisco Fernandez Pena. We compose the CPUSTAL delegation. In line with our principles, we have been internationalists and anti-imperialists, and shown unity and class consciousness. We are in solidarity with the heroic struggle of Panama in the defense of its rights and sovereignty which was led by General Omar Torrijos with his people, the workers. We are against the Yankee imperialism's cowardly and criminal attacks, open intervention, threats, blackmail, and economic blockade.

Our solidarity was expressed at the first moment of the attack, and we have continued expanding it because it is our duty. We will come to an agreement with other unions to establish actions in which the Latin American and Caribbean union movement will be able to make a significant contribution in the defense of Panama.

UN Envoy on Foreign Debt, Military Spending

FL2604002288 Havana Radio Rebelde Network in Spanish 2300 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] Today Oscar Oramas Oliva, Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, asserted that developing countries are affected twice as much by the increase of arms spending. Oramas made a comparison of military spending and the foreign debt to show how the former is by far greater than the resources needed by developing countries to pay their debt.

ANPP Delegation En Route to Netherlands

FL2504205388 Havana Radio Progreso Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] Severo Aguirre del Cristo, acting president of the National Assembly of the People's Government [ANPP], is en route to the Netherlands at the invitation of the Netherlands parliament. The Cuban delegation will also go to the FRG at the invitation of its parliament.

New Managerial System for FAR Centers Planned

FL2504204588 Havana Tele-Rebelde Network in Spanish 1100 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] The system of managerial improvement will be applied beginning in the second half of this year in 10 FAR centers, based on the experience of the Commander Ernesto Che Guevara Military-Industrial Enterprise. This novel system of administrative and economic management will begin in July in military institutions, industrial enterprises, a hospital, and agricultural-livestock farms.

It was also reported that labor principles will be applied at the same time, referring to suitability, broad profiles, and best qualifications [el mejor derecho]. Committees of experts will also be established.

Contamination of Guantanamo River Reported

FL2704165788 Havana Radio Reloj Network in Spanish 1412 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] The escape of cane muds from the Los Reinaldos sugar mill in Santiago de Cuba Province has contaminated the Guantanamo River, principal tributary of the La Yaya dam. More that 4 tons of fish have died.

The dam is the largest in the territory and it has a 160 million cubic meter capacity. Due to the persistent drought, the dam currently contains close to 110 million cubic meters.

Veterinarian (Buberto Matos) and biologist (Marle Montecino) of the Rio Frio La Yaya fishing center said that the source of the contamination comes from the oxidation vat at the sugar mill where some deposits were released that do not meet the technical requirements.

The person responsible for this will be placed at the disposition of the tribunals for his negligence, which has harmed not only the ecology, but also a food source for the people of Guantanamo.

Antigua and Barbuda

PM Bird Endorses 'Full Slate' of Candidates

FL2604031488 Bridgetown CANA in English 2116 GMT 23 Apr 88

[Text] St John's, Antigua, April 23, CANA—The executive of the ruling Antigua Labour Party (ALP) has retained all 16 incumbents as candidates for forthcoming general elections, constitutionally due next year. In its latest edition, the pro-government WORKERS VOICE newspaper said the political leader of the party, Prime Minister Vere Bird, had endorsed the full slate of candidates upon recommendation of a strategy committee which was set up earlier this year to deal with the question of primary elections within branches.

The issue of primaries arose as three incumbents responsible for trade, Hugh Marshall, and home affairs minister, Christopher O'Marde, faced challenges from party members. [sentence as received]

Harris' opponent was the fourth son of the prime minister, Ivor Bird, while medical doctor, Lemuel Sealey, was challenging Marshall.

Barrister and a former government senator, Steadroy Cutie Benjamin, challenged O'Marde for the St John's City South constituency.

According to the WORKERS VOICE, Marshall was endorsed by the constituency branch of St Mary's South and was subsequently recommended by the strategy committee and approved by the executive.

Another constituency which was in some form of uncertainty was that of City South where Barrister Cutie Benjamin challenged incumbent Christopher O'Marde for the seat, the paper said.

Benjamin was endorsed by the constituency branch but O'Marde was recommended by the committee, the WORKERS VOICE added.

It further stated that before the ALP executive could vote on the issue, a meeting was held between Benjamin and senior members of the party. The paper said as a result of the meeting, Benjamin withdrew his candidacy and pledged to support O'Marde.

It was the second time Benjamin had withdrawn his candidacy for the St Johns City South constituency, having done so in 1984 when he was told by the party executive that O'Marde would be contesting the seat for the last time.

Regarding the St Phillips South constituency and the incumbent, Reuben Harris, the WORKERS VOICE said neither the constituency branch nor the strategy committee wasted any time on the challenger as they considered him a non-starter from the beginning.

Ivor Bird, who had launched a vigorous campaign, has virtually withdrawn himself from the race with little or no activity now taking place.

Party sources said the announcement of ALP's slate of candidates was further indication that the party was preparing for snap general elections previously expected in April but now anticipated in June.

The full slate of candidates is as follows:

Prime Minister Vere Bird—St John's Rural North.
Deputy Prime Minister Lester Bird—St John's Rural East.
Finance Minister John St Luce—St John's City East.
Education Minister Reuben Harris—St Phillips South.

Labour Minister Adolphus Freeland—St Georges.
Home Affairs Minister Christopher O'Marde—St John's City South.
Public Works Minister Vere Bird Jr.—St John's Rural South.
Minister Responsible for Port Authority Henderson Simon—St John's City West.
Minister in the Ministry of Education Donald Christian—St John's Rural West.
Minister without portfolio Joseph Myers—St Peters.
Agriculture Minister Hilroy Humphreys—All Saints West.
Minister in the Ministry of Public Utilities Eustace Cochrane—All Saints East and St Luke.
Deputy Speaker of the House Dr Rodney Williams—St. Pauls.
Minister in the Ministry of Economic Development Molwyn Joseph—St Mary's North.
Minister Responsible for Trade Hugh Marshall—St Mary's South.
Public Utilities Minister Robin Yearwood—St Phillip's North.

Barbados

Prime Minister on U.S. Sugar Quota Cuts, CBI

FL2604012088 Bridgetown CANA in English 2029 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] Bridgetown, Barbados, April 25, CANA—Barbados Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford on Monday described the 25 per cent cut in the 1988 United States sugar import quota as a "disturbing development" for Caribbean economies and called for the allocations to be restored to the level of four years ago.

"Such a move we feel would help the sugar producing countries cope with their balance of payments problems in the short-term and give them the necessary breathing space for the huge task of diversifying their economies way from primary products," he said.

Sandiford, who is also Barbados minister of finance, was addressing the opening session of a three-day international conference on enhancing public/private sector partnerships for trade, investment and development, sponsored by the Washington-based non-profit organisation, Global Economic Action Institute (GEAI).

Diversification, he said, needed to be properly timed and phased and required a significant injection of resources into research and development of new crops and new products and the idenfitication of fresh export markets.

"An adequately designed package of capital and technical support for a diversification programme would be necessary," Sandiford said.

The quota cut, he said, "not only severely affects our economies because of the critical role played by the sugar industry, but it also runs counter to the spirit of the CBI, which was designed to develop and foster trade between our countries and the United States of America," said Sandiford who is also minister of finance and economic affairs.

Sandiford said the quota cuts would adversely affect the level of overall exports under Washington's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)—a four-year-old trade and aid programme for the region, with duty-free access for most Caribbean products as its key component.

Sandiford also suggested that a major research and development programme be launched into the alternative uses to which the sugar cane and sugar might be put to use.

He welcomed the announcement of a separate allotment of sugar for Caribbean and Central American countries in the 1988 federal spending bill.

"We hope that this tempory measure will be renewed for the 1989 period," he remarked.

Sandiford described the performance of CBI to date as "startling," with only limited positive effects on the Barbados economy and most of the English-speaking beneficiary countries.

He reported that Barbadian domestic exports to the U.S. dropped from U.S.108.9 million dollars in 1984 to U.S.65.5 million dollars in 1986 to U.S.33.8 million dollars last year. "This clearly indicates that Barbados is not benefitting from the CBI," Sandiford said. He said the recommendation to extend the CBI to the year 2007 was "an extremely important one" which would facilitate adjustments which Caribbean countries need to make to take full advantage of the CBI.

Sandiford stressed that the growth of exports from the region depended "critically" on new investments generated both within the Caribbean and from the U.S.

The U.S. Congress, Sandiford said, removed a powerful instrument which would have stimulated private investment in the Caribbean when it excluded the trade investments incentives originally proposed. He said he was heartened by recent proposals for the U.S. to explore greater investment incentives for CBI countries and underlined the need for increased extraregional trading.

"The contraction of intra-Caricom trade in the face of recessionary pressures makes it even more necessary for Caricom countries to adopt outward looking policies and to export outside the Caricom region," he said.

Sandiford said economic recovery in the industrialised countries was not providing the expected stimulus to the recovery of Caribbean and Latin American economics. "A real fear exists that the present cycle of recovery

might come to an end before significant improvement in the economies of the Caribbean is realised—a situation which would be disastrous for the countries of the region," he said.

"It is crucial at this stage that measures taken by the industrialsed countries to stimulate recovery of the economies of developing countries should be substantial if success is to be achieved," Sandiford added. He called on developed countries to strongly support multilateralism and urged them to channel as much assistance as possible through regional institutions.

Haiti

World Bank Delegation Arrives on 3-Week Visit

FL2604133788 Port-au-Prince Radio Metropole in French 1600 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Text] A 7-member World Bank delegation headed by Mr (Hassan Fazel), who is in charge of Latin America and the Caribbean, has been in Port-au-Prince since Monday, 18 April.

During its 3-week visit, the delegation will, first of all, examine with the Haitian authorities the possibility of releasing the second portion of the $40 million granted to Haiti as part of a loan agreement signed in Washington in January 1987. An initial $20-million installment was given in April 1987.

Second, the Haitian Government is to propose to the World Bank a strategy for economic growth in keeping with the country's particular characteristics.

Government Takes Steps To Maintain Gas Prices

FL2604232388 Port-au-Prince Radio Metropole in French 1600 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] The price of gasoline will remain unchanged on the local market despite an increase in fuel prices on the international market, says a Commerce Ministry communique.

The communique says the government has made a big sacrifice and agreed to lose 30 centimes [U.S. 6¢] in excise taxes. For their part, local distributors have agreed to decrease their profit margin by 10 centimes.

The decision not to increase the price of gasoline was reached following a meeting between Industry and Commerce Ministry officials, the distributors, the Anadipp [National Association of Importers of Petroleum Products], representatives of the public transportation unions, and a representative of the Finance Ministry.

Calling the public's attention to the measures taken by the government to avoid a rise in the cost of living, the Ministry of Commerce points out in its communique that there is a trend toward rising prices on the international oil market.

International Forum on Democracy Planned

FL2604165488 Port-au-Prince Radio Metropole in French 1600 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Excerpts] An international forum on democracy in Latin America will be held in Port-au-Prince from 27-30 April. Various prominent figures whose work contributes to the struggle to promote democracy in Latin America have been invited.

Present will be Argentinian Adolfo Perez Esquivel, winner of the 1987 [as heard] Nobel Peace Prize; Nicaraguan economist (Xavier Gorostiaga); Venezuelan historian Manuel Caballo; Dominican political scientist Max Puig; Ecuadoran researcher Agustin Cuevas; and Dr Hector Cuadra, a professor of international law from Mexico.

The objective of this forum on democracy in Latin America is to help maintain the opening for ideological and political debate provided by the departure of the Duvaliers; to transmit to democratic movement cadres, grassroots militants, intellectuals, university students, and the Haitian people in general other countries' experiences in struggling for democracy on the continent; and to stimulate and encourage a Latin American contribution to the consolidation of the Haitian process.

The Group for Reflection of the National University of Haiti, which was created in June of 1987, includes members of Feneh [National Federation of Haitian Students], Apesub [expansion unknown], and AEP [expansion unknown], and officials from the administrations of the Faculty of Sciences and Inaghei [National Institute for Management and Higher International Studies]. These are the people who are organizing this forum. Here are statements from some of them.

[Begin recording] [Speaker, in Creole] It is a forum on democracy in Latin America. We are going to discuss given topics, such as democracy in Venezuela. [passage omitted] Another topic is democracy and interventionism. This is particularly timely at present, and we will discuss the cases of Panama and Nicaragua in particular.

We will also discuss the struggle for democracy that has been waged in the neighboring Dominican Republic and see how we can benefit from the Dominican Republic's experience.

Another lecture topic is going to be democratization in South America. This topic is sure to be discussed in connection with the military dictatorships, the fascist regimes, that existed all over Latin America, and with the process of democratization. Democracy and constitutionalism will also be a topic.

In addition to these lectures, two roundtables are scheduled: one on democracy and the university and another on the experience of the democratic struggle in haiti, dealing particularly with the last 2 years. The latter roundtable will close the forum.

[Reporter] What are you expecting from this forum on democracy?

[Second speaker, in Creole] We would like to see an opening. First of all, we would like everyone interested in democratic ideas and in the (?struggle for democracy) to express themselves on the matter and exchange ideas. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Unions Address Minister on Rights Violations

FL2604231088 Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole 1100 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Excerpts] In connection with the problems workers are encountering in factories, the CATH [Autonomous Haitian Workers Central], the FOS [Federation of Workers Trade Unions], and the CNEH [National Confederation of Haitian Instructors] have written Social Affairs Minister Harry Carrenard.

They say: The presence of soldiers armed to the teeth is designed to intimidate workers and arbitrarily repress their legitimate demands, as well as destroy the union movement in Haiti. The union organizations stress that the 1987 Constitution recognizes people's right to strike and clearly stipulates the conditions under which the Army can intervene in factories, in case of civil unrest.

They say in their note to Carrenard that on the eve of 1 May, the union organizations ask his ministry to publicly take a stand on violations of democratic rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, the union organizations reject the references made to the Duvalierist labor code in order to declare the strikes at the Minoterie d'Haiti and at Ciment d'Haiti illegal. [passage omitted]

They say they are sure that the ministry will respond to their request, which is being made with the interests of the workers, and thus the interests of the entire nation, in mind. [passage omitted]

Workers Committee Origins, Goals Outlined

FL2604233588 Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole 1100 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Excerpts] [Passage omitted] A half day of patriotic reflection was organized by the COH [Haitian Workers Committee] on Saturday, 23 April, at the headquarters of KID [Confederation for Patriotic Unity] on the anniversary of the death of three workers in front of the Mevs plant during a demonstration on 23 April 1986. The COH members held a lecture/discussion generally based on the themes of oppression, demands, repression, and struggle.

COH, which according to the lecturers is a workers union organization that has been struggling in the interests of the workers and peasants for 4 years, came into being in 1984 at a factory called GTE. They began by supporting demands for a wage increase at that factory, where they asked management to raise wages from 15 gourdes to 22.50 gourdes [per day].

Because of pressure from ADIH [Haitian Manufacturers Association], the association of Haitian industrialists, the company changed its mind, dropped the 22.50-gourde wage, and returned to the 15 gourdes per day.

The Haitian authorities back then represented an obstacle to the struggle COH was waging to get their demands met. But COH was not discouraged. It later got together with other workers in other factories, such as Multitechnic, Alpha Electronics, and others, to form a union.

On 30 January 1986, COH staged a demonstration against the Duvalier regime. After Duvalier fell, COH also participated in the movement to uproot [mouvman dechoukaj la].

However, according to the lecturers, COH recognizes that it made the mistake back then of concerning itself with uprooting minor macoutes working in the factories, before realizing that the workers' real enemies are the bourgeoisie and the important factory owners.

COH had called for a demonstration on 11 April 1986 seeking to obtain $8.00 [per day] for factory workers. However, it says, other unions had distributed tracts asking for $3.50. Thus they were obliged to postpone this demonstration until 25 April. However, three workers among the workers from Cite Simone who came to join the demonstration fell into a trap in front of the Mevs plant, where they died by electrocution.

After all these blows, COH came to see the need to take a very firm stand and not participate in anything that was not in the interests of the workers and the small, landless peasant farmers. They say that is why they were not in favor of the Constitution of 29 March, which according to them deals the workers a big blow by saying that workers must not engage in politics and that people who do not own property may not be candidates.

COH thinks that the workers must work on their own to liberate themselves, work to get out of the tough situation into which the bourgeoisie and the bosses have put them. As an example of the bad working conditions the workers have to put up with, COH gave the case of the GTE plant, where last Thursday a mechanic died when a

machine exploded inside the plant. They also pointed out all the maneuvers, exploitation, and oppression workers undergo in that factory. [passage omitted]

Gonaives Men Released; Protest Set for 1 May

FL2604224288 Port-au-Prince Radio Metropole in Creole 1600 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Report from Gonaives correspondent Edgard Bruno]

[Excerpts] Mr (Antoine Norgues), head of the civil court in Gonaives, released Antoine Prudent at around 1100 yesterday. Prudent, a stockroom clerk at ODPG, the Gonaives Plain Development Organization, was arrested by the police last Wednesday, 20 April.

According to the representative of the Department of the Public Prosecutor, the Army arrested Prudent on the basis of a mere report sent to it by the ODPG's director, agronomist Joseph Simon Millien. It seems that in the report the director blamed Prudent for thefts from the organization's warehouse but he had no proof.

(Norgues) ruled that the arrest was illegal, because there had been no warrant and the man had not been caught in the act.

Antoine Prudent and two other employees who had also been arrested were released yesterday at around 1100.

The case is not yet closed, however, because the men's lawyers, (Antoine Saint-Vil) and (Dieuseul Placide), have indicated that they might sue the representative of the Department of the Public Prosecutor and the ODPG for (?false arrest). [passage omitted]

Also, on Sunday, 1 May, on the very day of the agriculture festival, several hundred peasants are going to take to the streets in (Pont l'Estere) in a demonstration. They will be led by CATH/CLAT [Autonomous Haitian Workers Central affiliated with the Latin American Central Organization of Workers] and the Workers and Peasants Committee [Komite Travye Peyizan].

Many other small farmers are going to come from surrounding areas to protest the abusive irrigation taxes they are paying in the valley and to force the Manigat-/Celestin government to lower the prices of a number of products and agricultural materials, such as fertilizers.

They are to ask that the government lower the price of many other products too, such as cement, nails, and tin roofing sheets. Then they, too, might be willing to lower the price of their products.

People who have spoken with them report the peasants have heard that the government said that if the rice growers from Artibonite refused to bring down the cost of rice, the government would import rice in order to compete with the Artibonite's rice growers.

The peasants say: The government cannot ask such a thing. They say: That's crazy! In order for you to be able to ask that the price of the local product decrease, you have to lower the cost of a number of things that permit the producers to produce the product. Thus the peasants are asking Mr Manigat and the other members of the government to lower the cost of all the products they need to grow rice, and also to lower the price of a variety of things they have to buy in stores. Only then will they agree to reduce their prices.

They say they are going to demonstrate. If after the demonstration on 1 January [date as heard], the government has not given them satisfaction, they will do other things to make their voices heard.

Soldiers Said To Solicit Bribes in Miragoane

FL2704123388 Port-au-Prince Radio Soleil Network in Creole 1100 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Report from Miragoane]

[Excerpt] In Miragoane, there has been a rumor for about a week now to the effect that ships are unloading merchandise in the middle of the night. This has been kept quiet because of who is involved in this activity.

On Thursday, 21 April, at around 2100, Mrs (Farcile Jasme), who is some (?78) years old, went to pick up a shipment of approximately 96 sacks of rice off the coast, at sea.

When she arrived behind [words indistinct] she was very surprised to find three soldiers awaiting her. She claims they are Sergeant (Perard), Sergeant (Kenn), and Corporal (Noe). These soldiers asked her for a bribe. She offered them $50. They said they wanted $200. After bargaining, they accepted $100. She gave Sergeant (Perard) the $100.

The soldiers found the amount insufficient. They came with their boat and carted the rice away. They had a few other soldiers like themselves come take some, too.

What saved the woman was the fact that a corporal named (Walter) appeared and told his brothers in arms: You are committing an abuse against this lady because she is not well to do. He seized the opportunity to tell the woman that she had to inform him when she engaged in this sort of activity.

The ship that was engaging in this activity during the night was the ("Julmise") and it is owned by Yvon.

We attempted to talk to the soldiers this morning. We found Sergeant (Perard), who said to us: The lady is right. He said nothing further. We were unable to find Sergeant (Kenn) and were informed that Corporal (Noe) is not (?stationed) here.

Despite all our efforts to see the sub-district commander, First Lieutenant (Lelio Titus), or district commander Captain (Jean Andre Cius), the corporal on guard duty said this was not possible for the time being and that we could see him later. [passage omitted]

Trinidad and Tobago

Officials Probing Ammunition Dump Explosion

FL2704180788 Bridgetown CANA in English 1553 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, April 27, CANA—An official probe was underway here Wednesday into an explosion that killed six persons and caused extensive damage at an Army ammunition depot on Tuesday.

The Defence Force mandated a team to conduct a full investigation into the cause of the blast, which occured as about 40 soldiers and firemen were fighting an all-day bush fire behind the bunker at Camp Omega.

Four firemen and two soldiers were killed and about 19 other persons hospitalised as a result of the blast, that also destroyed or damaged four fire tenders.

One Army official estimated damage to Army equipment, including vehicles, bunkers, and other buildings in the area at tt5 million dollars (1 tt dol; 27.7 cents U.S.).

Officers have warned reporters visiting the scene that unexploded explosives were believed to be still in the dump. The Army said it would detonate the explosives on Wednesday.

Eight of the injured have been discharged from the hospital, while two soldiers have undergone emergency surgery, officials said.

Prime Minister A.N.R. Robinson, National Security Minister, Senator Herbert Atwell, and Health Minister Dr. Emmanuel Hosein visited the injured in hospital late Tuesday night.

Cause Still Unknown

FL2704231188 Bridgetown CANA in English 2036 GMT 27 Apr 88

[By Debra Ransome]

[Text] Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, April 27, CANA—Prime Minister A.N.R. Robinson on Wednesday received a preliminary report on an explosion at an Army ammunitions bunker in north west Trinidad on Tuesday which left four firemen and two soldiers dead.

The report was prepared by Defence Force officials after a morning of investigations into the accident, believed to have been triggered by the intense heat from a bush fire. However, Defence Force officials told CANA they had been unable to find out the cause of the explosion. The cause is so far unknown...We will have to rely on the fuller Defence Force enquiry, an official said.

Defence Force public relations officer, Nollie Rimple, confirmed that the force had set up its own internal board of enquiry, under its establishing laws.

The blast devastated two hillsides and destroyed all buildings but one in the valley, formerly used as an Army camp.

The board of enquiry, an internal investigation team, will be expected to interview the injured soldiers, and re[illegible]ing eyewitnesses. The board is expected to report before the end of the week.

One thing that was found out Wednesday morning was that the bunker which exploded was not intended to house explosives, officials said.

The bunker, built by American forces here during the Second World War, was known as the Omega Navigations Station, and housed American defence communications personnel. It was handed over to Trinidad and Tobago in 1969. The building was then used to store explosives left by local quarry owners. It was not approved for this...It was merely used for bunkering, a Defence Force official explained.

Robinson held an early Wednesday morning meeting on the incident with National Security Minister Herbert Atwell and Senior Defence Force officials at his Whitehall office.

Bank of Mexico Head Foresees Slight Recession

PA2504191188 Mexico City XEW Television Network in Spanish 1300 GMT 25 Apr 88

[Report by Vicente Rodriguez]

[Text] Fernando Solana, director general of Banamex [Bank of Mexico] has said that anti-inflationary efforts will generate some recession in the second half of the year. Solana, attending a meeting on financing organized by PRI leaders in the Federal District, said that the country's economy will contract to some extent as a side effect of the reduction of inflation.

Solana also said that despite the reduction of nominal banking rates, deposits have increased because depositers have realized that real rates are increasing. According to Banamex reports, in the first quarter of 1988 there was a 140-percent increase in deposits over the same period in 1987.

Finally, reaffirming statements made by Finance Secretary Gustavo Petricioli, Solana rejected the possibility of a devaluation because the return of capital has continued, and this has helped Mexico have the highest level of foreign reserves in its history, reserves which some sources set at more than $15 billion.

Talks To Increase Trade With USSR Underway

FL2804015288 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish 2145 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] Mexico City, 26 Apr (NOTIMEX)—Mexico and the Soviet Union are negotiating an increase in trade in order to eliminate the differences of an increasingly satisfactory political dialogue within the framework of agreements, mutual respect, and a poor exchange in science, technology, and trade.

A Commerce and Industrial Development Secretariat press release indicates that a Mexican delegation headed by Luis Bravo Aguilera, under secretary of foreign trade, and his Soviet counterpart are attempting to create a joint economic cooperation commission which would establish a comprehensive and overall approach to bilateral relations.

Regarding this, Bravo Aguilera stressed that Mexico needs to diversify its trade to avoid concentrating the majority of its exports in a single nation. This will be considered in the long-term economic and scientific-technical cooperation plan being negotiated between the Soviet Union and Mexico.

The document, currently under negotiation in the Soviet capital, seeks to encourage traditional transactions and establish new forms of commercial payments through third countries.

Vladimir Burmistrov, deputy minister of foreign trade of the USSR, agreed with the points brought up by Bravo Aguilera and said the long-term program opens new avenues to develop economic, commercial, and scientific-technical ties between the two countries.

The negotiations will continue and the document will be signed as soon as Juan Jose Bremer, new Mexican ambassador to the USSR, presents his credentials. The date will be set through the proper diplomatic channels.

New Envoy to USSR To Prepare Gorbachev Visit

PA2004043388 Mexico City XHTV Television in Spanish 0200 GMT 20 Apr 88

[Text] Today the Foreign Relations Secretariat announced that President Miguel de la Madrid has appointed Juan Jose Bremer as Mexico's ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bremer has been chairman of the Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Relations Committee since 1985. His main mission now will be to prepare the visit that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev will make to Mexico. Unofficially, it is expected the visit will take place during the second half of this year.

El Salvador

Duarte Proposes Rodriguez as PDC Candidate

PA2704151988 San Salvador Radio Cadena YSKL in Spanish 1150 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Speech to the nation by President Jose Napoleon Duarte on 26 April; place not given—recorded]

[Text] Salvadoran people: Because of the importance to the country's democratic life, permit me to address my fellow Christian Democratic Party [PDC] members. Dear fellow party members:

Tonight I address the conscience of the PDC as a citizen and as honorary party president to explain my position on the PDC's internal situation. I want to tell you that despite the problems that the precandidacies have been causing for quite some time, I have not intervened nor have I wanted to intervene because I am respectful of the party decisions. Nevertheless, the situation has reached such a point that it is advisable that I express my views on this problem.

The party today is in a difficult situation. This is not the first time it has been in such a predicament. But the situation that I refer to has been of another nature. In our 27 years of struggle, we have suffered persecution, jail, exile, and the death of our fellow party members. All of this has taken place so El Salvador will have a more just, fair, and democratic society, a society in which the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, democracy, and pluralism can be guaranteed.

Because of this struggle and these principles, we grew and triumphed in 1972 and 1977, and because of this we were able to begin a democratic process in this decade. The people again gave us their confidence in 1984 and 1985. Nevertheless, on 20 March 1988 we received a serious warning in this effort to build democracy.

It is true that the people had many expectations. Some of those expectations were promoted by us while others arose from the people in light of the hope that we represented. Many expectations were not met, and because of this the people have sent us a message through the 20 March elections. Several important factors contributed to this [words indistinct] of the expectations: the war, the earthquake, the economic crisis and its social effects, etc. The people felt that their basic needs were affected, and the past elections reflect this situation.

It must also be acknowledged that there has been progress. We have promoted a democratic process. We have created room for freedom and we have paid an important political price so there will be tolerance in resolving the country's conflicts. With all of this, we have contributed to change in the country. We know that this is a process and that, as such, it takes time. Nevertheless, in sum, the unfavorable points outweighed the favorable points in the past elections.

These elections, however, cannot be exclusively explained by the situation outside the party. The party's internal situation has led to adverse factors. The main and most important of those factors has been the party's internal division. This division, which is the result of the precandidacy struggle, greatly weakened us as a political force in past elections. It weakened us because this struggle pitted party members against fellow party members. It created grudges and resentments that prevented us from working in a united fashion in these elections. These conditions reduced the capacity to struggle. They reduced the discipline and responsibility among our cadres because they did not want to support those who were seen as political rivals. In this way, our overall strength decreased and our power to win in the elections was reduced. Today, our party is not as it was before when our strength was based on our unity.

This is not 1972, 1977, or 1984. Today our existence is threatened from within the party itself. This is not rational. This is not advisable. It is harmful to the party and to the democratic process that we have begun. The future of democracy in El Salvador is linked to the future of the PDC. There is no truly democratic contender for the 1989 elections. We, as party members, have the historic responsibility to continue this process, but the party cannot continue it nor can it adequately renew itself if it is not united.

When we began our political life we did so convinced that man is the author of his own destiny and that human society can be perfected on the basis of the free will of each human being and his natural instinct to seek social integration and progress to higher levels of satisfaction and peace. Therefore, we are aware that politics is a natural and ideal instrument for participation and struggle in favor of our own ideological objectives. Throughout the years, we have maintained firm ideological principles and the conviction that their strict observance has given us historic responsibilities that we cannot disrespect and much less ignore.

We have before us a commitment to our people and to the international community that has witnessed our efforts in support of the democratic process. To date, we have been the only ones capable of facing, with political realism and authentic democratic options, the challenge of war and social injustice. In the face of the undemocratic plans of the extreme left wing and right wing, we have maintained and developed with pragmatism, and without demagoguery and utopianism, a plan of peace with freedom and of freedom with bread. There is no other possible alternative for the fatherland. In the face of authoritarianism or totalitarianism, there is only the path of Christian Democracy. To continue on this course is a patriotic imperative. To move away from it represents a dangerous situation filled with risks and uncertainties that could lead fatally to the closed radicalism of other systems we are all aware of or that are close to our borders.

In the past elections, our voters chose the path of abstention. They were partly motivated by the mistakes and deterioration that are natural for any government, and by the party's disunity as a result of the internal struggle for the presidential candidacy. This phenomenon has been expressed through a negative factionalism that is contrary to political unity and the moral strength we have always had.

It is unnecessary to state that the current time is critical for the party we represent. The party can have, and even needs, different factions, but it has immutable foundations that must be respected without questioning, which undermines their essence. One of them is the party's unitary nature, which makes possible the use at any time of the recourse of calling the party together to support great decisions. This has been invariably expressed throughout the years.

Maintaining the political plan to help the masses requires a strong party. But this is only possible if all, I repeat, if all of us are aware that strength is the result of the unity that comes from total identification with suprapersonal values. I have seen enormous efforts but I have also been a silent witness to the blindness and stubbornness of those who should have made good sense prevail over intransigency and reason over unreasonableness.

Under different circumstances, the two precandidates could have led the party to victory in the next presidential election. However, given the development of events, neither of the precandidates has real possibilities of achieving the party unity that will ensure triumph. To think and act otherwise would lead us to electoral defeat with grave implications for the country's democratic development, for which many Salvadorans have suffered, even to the point of losing their lives.

I had the confidence and hope that both precandidates were going to achieve a consensus. However, various agreements, which were reached in the political committee and which they asked me to endorse, were not completely fulfilled for one reason or another.

Recent events have made the real possibilities of achieving the necessary unity and consensus even more difficult. I know how the party's rank and file members feel. They expressed themselves in the evaluation meetings held throughout the country. I express their demands for an end to the internal division and for a candidate of consensus. Because of the previously mentioned reasons, for party reasons, and because of the clamor from the party's rank and file, I ask the following:

1. That Dr Fidel Chavez Mena and Julio Adolfo Rey Prendes give up their presidential candidacy aspirations;

2. That the party congress and convention on 29 April not elect the party candidate;

3. That unity be promoted to resolve this problem.

Based on these points, I propose Dr Abraham Rodriguez as the candidate for unity. Dr Rodriguez is a party founder and, several times, he has been its secretary general during those difficult times in the past. He was our first presidential candidate and, since 1984, he has been the first presidential designate.

I think that under the present conditions, this is the best proposal. I am making this proposal as a citizen and as honorary president of the PDC. I am appealing to the rationality and historic responsibility born of 27 years of struggle. I am appealing to the rationality and historic responsibility of Dr Fidel Chavez Mena and Julio Adolfo Rey Prendes as comrades in the struggle. I am appealing to the rationality and historic responsibility of all the party leaders at the national level for the future of our members. I am appealing to the heart and blood of the party, its rank and file, which have made of the PDC a party of the people to serve the people.

Christian Democrats, history demands a decision of unity. I ask that God enlighten all of us so that we can fulfill our historic responsibility and destiny.

Fellow Christian Democrats, Salvadoran people, good night.

FMLN Reiterates Warning to U.S. Citizens

PA2804004888 San Salvador EL MUNDO in Spanish 26 Apr 88 p 2

[Text] The FMLN has reiterated its warning to all U.S. civilian and military citizens that if they support the U.S.-drafted counterinsurgency plan, they will be the target of rebel attacks.

FMLN Commander Ricardo Sibrian, in statements to journalists in San Juan de la Cruz, Chalatenango Department, said this is their response to the "U.S. intervention" in our country, especially because of the "actions carried out against the civilian population in conflict areas."

Sibrian added: "All U.S. officials who are committed to the counterinsurgency policy and all military advisers who are responsible for leading the war are considered military targets by the FMLN."

According to the guerrillas, "this position is clearly expressed with the decision to activate the FMLN urban commandos, especially in San Salvador, and with the increase of rebel actions, while the Armed Forces continue to drop bombs on the civilian population."

"Meanwhile, there are areas (such as the Zona Rosa) where U.S. citizens and Christian Democratic Party officials go to enjoy themselves, in contrast to the national reality, where new actions are expected," he warned. He added: "This contrast may be seen in the

way in which the dictatorship conducts the war in peasant areas and in the way it tries to use San Salvador as a showcase for the world, while it unleashes a repression with bombings and dislodgings in rural areas."

The rebels believe "they have increasingly shown their military capabilities, both in the interior and in the capital. A proof of this is the ambush that resulted in 25 casualties on the Armed Forces in Santa Maria Ostuma, La Paz Department, when a truck exploded as it touched a terrorist mine. [quotation mark as published]

Commander Sibrian said the blood shed by the people can only be stopped by means of a political, negotiated solution to the armed conflict through the participation of a large number of patriotic sectors who want peace with justice and freedom and without U.S. intervention.

However, Sibrian said that President Jose Napoleon Duarte's regime is not interested in ending the internal war and is not listening to the demands of the people who want peace. He mentioned the fact that the government has rejected the guerrillas' proposal to hold talks.

Reports Urban Actions

PA2804034688 (Clandestine) Radio Venceremos in Spanish to El Salvador 0000 GMT 28 Apr 88

[Text] While the militias and clandestine guerrillas work in the interior of the country on all war fronts by blowing up power pylons and ambushing enemy troops, thus deepening the failure of the Yankee counterinsurgency tactics, in San Salvador and in the other cities the FMLN urban commandos are bringing the people's war to the luxurious suburbs where the exploiters live.

Urban commandos in San Salvador detonated powerful explosive charges in the Uraya Theater's parking lot, making the Christian Democratic Party [PDC] oligarchs and their puppet government tremble. The people's war is already reaching the doors of the enemies of the people. The irresistible force of this furious sea of people organized in the militias, guerrillas, and urban commandos will wipe out Napoleon Duarte and the PDC, the high command gorillas, and the occupants of the Yankee embassy.

We call upon our people to be on the alert to the movements of those who plan, order, execute, and cover up the repression against our people. We call upon you to gather intelligence about the enemy's movements and give the information to the urban commandos. Heroic urban commandos, we salute you. Keep on bringing the revolutionary war to the lair of the criminals. We live to fight; we fight to win.

Car Bomb Detonated

PA27041455 Paris AFP in Spanish 0524 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] San Salvador, 26 Apr (AFP)—A car bomb exploded tonight near a theater in the western outlying sector of the Salvadoran capital. There were no victims, although the blast did cause damage.

According to the police, other explosive devices were also placed near the Sheraton Hotel which, like the theater, is also located in the Escalon neighborhood.

The authorities reported that demolition experts were sent to the area to defuse the bombs.

Venceremos Reports 61 Army Casualties 21-27 April

PA2804041988 [Editorial report] (Clandestine) Radio Venceremos in Spanish to El Salvador at 0000 GMT on 28 April reports that "at 0200 on 25 April, FMLN members attacked Jucuaran Battalion soldiers at San Francisco Javier, Usulutan Department, and inflicted three casualties, one of whom was a sergeant, who was wounded."

In addition, the station says that "on 23 April, Lenca, Cacaguatique, Morazan, Ponce, and Arce Battalions initiated a movement in several directions, toward Torola, Villa del Rosario, Volcancillo, Meanguera, Calle Negra, La Joya, and Cerro Pando. During the night, FMLN forward units detected the penetration of Honduran territory by commando units combined with Honduran and Salvadoran Army members. The commando units entered Morazan Department from Honduran territory."

The rebels reportedly "inflicted seven casualties to Lenca Battalion, two of whom were killed. Also, Ponce Battalion sustained one casualty at Torola. On 24 April, the Ponce Battalion suffered three casualties, one caused by an antipersonnel mine and another by rifle fire. The Lenca Battalion sustained one dead and one wounded at Volcancillo. The Cacaguatique Battalion sustained one casualty by a mine at Joateca."

The report adds that on "25 April, the FMLN inflicted three casualties on Cacaguatique Battalion at Joateca. The Arce Battalion suffered two casualties at Torola, while the Lenca Battalion sustained four casualties at Calle Negra." Colonel Emilio Ponce, commander of the 3d Infantry Brigade, reportedly was slightly wounded.

"On 27 April, we inflicted seven casualties on Lenca Battalion at Volcancillo. "

Finally, the station said that so far "during the course of the operation in Morazan, the enemy has sustained 61 casualties. We repeat: From 21 to 27 April, the puppet troops have suffered 61 casualties."

Honduras

U.S. 'Humanitarian Aid' Arrives at Toncontin

PA2804000588 Tegucigalpa Voz de Honduras Network in Spanish 1800 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] A Hercules C-130 plane from [name indistinct] base in North Carolina landed at the civilian area of Toncontin Airport at 0830 today. The plane carried 38,000 pounds of humanitarian aid, consisting of clothing, footwear, and kitchenware. The load was received by U.S. Embassy personnel.

The delivery of this aid was verified by laymen designated by the Catholic Church. When asked about Nicaraguan Ambassador Daniel Abood Vivas's objection about the Honduran Government's authorization to deliver this aid according to the Sapoa agreements, [Deputy Foreign Minister] Eugenio Castro said this humanitarian aid is provided for in Point 5 of the Esquipulas II agreement and that this does not interfere with the negotiations.

He also said Esquipulas II does not forbid humanitarian aid. When asked if this aid is intended for contras or the displaced, Castro said: It involves people at the border, regardless of whether they are contras or displaced. We cannot let people starve to death. It could prove dangerous, both for Nicaragua and the region, to have hungry, completely unprotected people. To permit this aid to be delivered is rather a contribution toward preventing the situation from deteriorating at the border.

Nicaragua

RN's Ferrey Views Upcoming Talks in Managua

PA2704212588 San Jose Radio Impacto in Spanish 1845 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Interview with Nicaraguan Resistance (RN) member Roberto Ferrey by Alejandro Acevedo; date, place not given—recorded]

[Excerpts] [Acevedo] The Nicaraguan Resistance members have left for the new talks at the Camino Real Hotel where, like last week, they will be confined, controlled, and virtually held hostage by the Sandinist regime. [passage omitted]

Roberto Ferrey, how does the RN view the new round of talks with the Sandinist dictatorship?

[Ferrey] I think one has to be realistic now. The circumstances indicate that the situation is quite different from that of 15 April. We were optimistic on 15 April. The belief then was that a number of situations would be resolved in Managua and that there would be progress with the implementation of the Sapoa agreements. For the RN, the situation at this moment is that the Sapoa agreements must be complied with. Compliance with the agreement means covering the stages it established. The basic, fundamental stage is the approval of the modus operandi that will apply to the various zones where the RN troops will be located.

We have not yet reached agreement on the modus operandi. Apparently, the FSLN regrets signing the Sapoa agreement, because the agreement expedited the approval of new humanitarian aid to the RN. The Sandinists apparently see the approval of this aid as preventing the RN forces from being destroyed, divided, or disbanded, so to speak. At this moment the Sandinists are trying every means to delay the delivery of food, clothing, and medicine to the RN forces.

This is the situation at this moment, and that is why the Sandinists are now presenting what they dub as a response, an overall agreement that involves a permanent cease-fire. It means overcoming or, better put, skipping stages rather than advancing according to the Sapoa agreements, which is a process that advances stage by stage. They want to jump to the last stage, which consists of putting an end to the war, but without establishing the required conditions to achieve democracy.

I am going to use a phrase by an exiled newsman. He asked: How will I return home when the beast that made me leave is still there? The Sandinists want a permanent cease-fire agreement to be signed without establishing the conditions to end the causes of the war. The RN insists that what was agreed to in Sapoa was a temporary truce, or a halt to offensive military operations for 60 days, during which the Sandinists would demonstrate their intention to make a change and to break up the triumvirate that is a tragedy for Nicaragua. This triumvirate is the oneness of the state, the party, and the Army. This triumvirate existed during the Somoza period, and thousands of us Nicaraguans struggled and died to break it up. Somoza was president of the Liberal Party, chief of the National Guard, and head of state. He had his brother as second in command.

Now, Mr Ortega is a member of the FSLN Directorate. He is head of the executive branch, and his brother is the EPS chief. There is total confusion, as they were told during the talks. With whom is the RN talking? With the Sandinist party, with the Nicaraguan Government, or with the EPS?

Ramirez on Contra Split, Talks, U.S. Actions

PA2704225688 Managua Radio Sandino in Spanish 1250 GMT 27 Apr 88

[News conference held by Vice President Sergio Ramirez with unidentified reporters at the Augusto C. Sandino Airport in Managua upon his return from Spain; date not given—recorded; broadcast in progress]

[Text] [Ramirez]...saw many other officials and political leaders. I participated in the Cervantes award ceremony won by Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes and in programs promoting the presentation of my book in Spain.

I would say that my meetings with political leaders were very positive. I spoke to Prime Minister Gonzalez and Deputy Prime Minister Guerra about the economic cooperation between Spain and Nicaragua, and we agreed to send an economic mission to Spain on 15 May to negotiate extending the cooperation. I spoke extensively with Prime Minister Gonzalez about Nicaragua's peace efforts and Spain's participation, together with the FRG and Canada, in the Esquipulas supervisory commission.

[Reporter] Dr Ramirez, THE NEW YORK TIMES reports serious disagreements between Colonel Bermudez and Adolfo Calero. Please give us your comments.

[Ramirez] The European press has also reported these disagreements; I believe it is natural that they occur. The force that unites counterrevolutionary leaders has always been U.S. military, economic, and organizational [organico] support. As soon as there are problems in obtaining support or it is given another form, disagreements arise between those leaders who want to continue war and do not want to accept reality, and those who really want the negotiating process.

[Reporter] Dr Ramirez, Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams is presently traveling to Miami to talk to the counterrevolutionary leaders and to prevent what Washington considers a mutiny within the contra leadership. What are your comments about this situation?

[Ramirez] I believe the U.S. Administration's most radical groups are not only trying to maintain unity within the counterrevolutionary leadership but are also trying to make the next round of meetings, which begin in Managua tomorrow, fail. These radical groups are not interested in the achievement of any sort of practical or concrete results at these meetings. Their priority continues to be the rejection of the Sapoa agreements; it seems to me that Mr Abrams is working in that direction.

[Reporter] There also are reports that the counterrevolution is going to demand that the Nicaraguan Government allow aid to counterrevolutionary forces within Nicaragua by AID...

[Ramirez, interrupting] I do not want to comment on the agenda that is to be discussed at these meetings; I am just arriving and do not have complete information. Before making comments on these topics, I would like to meet with the president and with General Ortega.

However, what clearly stands out is that Nicaragua continues to be serious and constant in the negotiations and that our serious efforts are evident. The Europeans are aware that Nicaragua is complying with the Esquipulas and Sapoa agreements, that we have taken all the necessary steps to comply, and that we always find the same obstacle: the Reagan administration's decision against any peaceful resolution of the conflict.

[Reporter] Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo negotiated with the counterrevolutionary leaders for the release of dozens of kidnapped people in their power during their last meeting. Have they complied?

[Ramirez] According to Esquipulas, they are obliged to do so, but it does not have to be specified in Esquipulas for them to have this obligation. The Nicaraguan Government has legitimately demanded that the counterrevolution release all kidnapped people.

[Reporter] Your visit to Spain was a private one. You went to release your novel "Divine Punishment." How did the Spaniards receive your novel?

[Ramirez] I would say it was well received. The second edition comes out this week. The publishers gave me the excellent news just before my return to Nicaragua. The promotion of the book was excellent, and the critics were generous with it. I hope my book and my appearance as a writer in Spain will serve to promote the revolution's interest. The book is also going to be published in Mexico and Argentina in June.

[Reporter] How many copies have been printed in this edition of "Divine Punishment"?

[Ramirez] 10,000 copies.

Panama

CCN 'Urban Violence Plan' Reportedly Uncovered

PA2804022388 Panama City Televisora Nacional in Spanish 0050 GMT 28 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Panamanian Attorney General Carlos Villalaz, in exclusive statements to Televisora Nacional this afternoon, talked about the operation that the National Civic Crusade [CCN] will carry out tomorrow, an operation that includes violent acts and the disruption of public order. [passage omitted]

This is what the prosecutor told this station:

[Begin recording] I want to inform the citizens that the state security services have discovered the programming of an urban violence plan that is to be implemented tomorrow, 28 April. This plan was created by a sector of the CCN and involves an executive committee, interneighborhood committees, and several neighborhood committees. The identities of the people who compose these committees have been uncovered.

The plan contains specific instructions for specific actions to be carried out at specific places. The state security services have also already identified these places.

In addition, we determined that certain buildings of the country's managerial associations were used to devise these plans.

We want to tell the community that the actions we discovered are crimes; therefore, we have ordered the continuation of this investigation and the arrest of all the citizens who compose the executive committee, the interneighborhood committees, and the neighborhood committees.

According to documents found during raids and seized from detainees, we found out that there are neighborhood committees that have a work plan with specific objectives and goals and tasks that were to be carried out. [passage omitted]

These are the proofs and, based on them, we have instructed the police to make the pertinent arrests. [end recording]

Modesto Bedoya is one of those arrested who confessed part of tomorrow's CCN plan. He told this station the following:

[Begin recording] [Bedoya] I know that people have weapons for that day. Since there is talk of violence for that activity, the idea is for people to have something to defend themselves with at a given moment.

[Reporter] Are there any more people, aside from those already mentioned, who are responsible for coordinating, in different areas, the violent actions that are planned for that day?

[Bedoya] I only know of Alonso Villarreal of the Christian Democratic Party. The people who are in charge of distributing the leaflets for those days are Carmen Boyd, Loyda Flores, and Lisandro [name as heard]; they are in charge of distributing last-minute information.

[Reporter] Where is the operations center, and where will final instructions be given on 28 April?

[Bedoya] The Association of Panamanian Industrialists has always been the place for that. [end recording]

In conclusion, let us listen to a second part of Villalaz' statements:

[Begin recording] Based on these plans, we questioned several Panamanians who are involved in these subversive actions. Based on these statements, we raided certain places where some organizations operate. At these places, we found evidence that agrees with testimony given by certain people who had already been arrested.

We have proceeded based on this, because we are acting in accordance with the law, to order the arrest of those who are members of the CCN Executive Committee, the interneighborhood committees, and the various zones [as heard] that appeared in the documents we found. These are people who work at various places, including local banks, and are members of this committee.

We instructed the police authorities to make the pertinent arrests, because these actions are a crime according to Chapter 2 of the Penal Code concerning crimes of state security. [passage omitted]

Arrests Reported

PA2804034588 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 0302 GMT 28 Apr 88

[Excerpt] Panama City, (ACAN-EFE)—At least six [as received] supporters of the opposition Civic Crusade were arrested and have been held by the Panamanian authorities since Tuesday for questioning about an alleged subversive plot that was exposed today, Osvaldo Velasquez, chairman of the Panamanian Human Rights Commission, reported today.

According to the source, the Panama Defense Forces [FDP] arrested Dante Viggiano, Carlos de la Guardia, Enrique Marquez, Jose Luis Moreno, and Modesto Bedoya. The source added that the FDP did not have arrest orders for most of these people.

Unofficial sources reported that business leader Henry Ford and his son, Jose Luis, have also been arrested. [passage omitted]

New Foreign Minister on Relations With U.S.

PA2704193188 Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1835 GMT 27 Apr 88

[News conference held by Foreign Minister Jorge Ritter with unidentified reporters at the Foreign Ministry after Ritter was sworn into office—live or recorded; broadcast in progress]

[Text] [Ritter] ...to reiterate that whatever the nature of the talks between Panamanian Government officials and U.S. Government officials, what you can be sure of is that Panama is going to find its own solution. It will be the final solution, after it is discussed with other people, other governments, but the final solution will be a Panamanian solution.

[Reporter] Are foreign relations going to be emphasized in order to improve relations with the United States? [sentence as heard]

[Ritter] I think that for Panama it is necessary and imperative to normalize relations with the United States. At this time it is virtually a one-way relation, because Panama has respected and continues to respect the diplomatic status of U.S. officials. Yet in response to this the United States has disavowed our consuls and our diplomatic officials accredited to international organizations. Of course, that is a difficult task, but it is a priority for my term in office.

[Reporter] What plan will be implemented to get the United States to recognize the government?

[Ritter] That cannot be part of a plan. That has to be part of a reality that the United States will have to consider within the structure of its own government, to determine when the recognition that has been delayed will be given.

[Reporter] When you said the departure of General Noriega should be part of an overall solution, what did you specifically mean? What conditions should exist for that to happen?

[Ritter] I referred to the following. There are many people who simplistically maintain that the mere departure of Gen Noriega could resolve the Panamanian crisis. I do not think the Panamanian crisis has such a simple or easy solution. It is not a case of whether or not a man remains in a certain position, but rather involves a national struggle. Therefore, such simple formulas do not lead anywhere. That is what I meant when I said that if Gen Noriega's departure could help resolve the crisis, it would have to be part of a broad-based concept in which all problems would be resolved and all Panamanians would sit down at the negotiating table. That is what I said.

[Reporter] Mr Minister, what will Panama's foreign policy be during your term?

[Ritter] Panama's foreign policy remains unchanged. The president of the Republic, who directs it and defines it, clearly stated this when he took office, and he has reiterated this on several occasions. The cabinet changes are due to Solis Palma's desire to give it more vigor by including people who were not exactly new but who were, as in my case, in other posts and other fields. But Panama's foreign policy is defined by Solis Palma.

[Reporter] Have you talked with former Panamanian Ambassador to Washington Sosa since you returned to Panama?

[Ritter] No, I have not talked to former Ambassador Sosa at any time.

[Reporter] Are relations between the two countries severed at this time?

[Ritter] No, relations between the two countries have not been severed. They are at a very low point, but they have not been broken.

[Reporter] What is your evaluation of Vernon Walters' South American tour?

[Ritter] I have always been respectful in these cases; just as we do not like others to judge our position, we do not judge the positions of other countries. I believe the press has given wide coverage to the efforts of my former colleague Vernon Walters, and the evidence is in the press, which has reported on the replies he received from various countries. Only time will tell whether his efforts were successful.

We cannot question the right of an ambassador to the United Nations to conduct a worldwide tour while contacting various foreign ministries. However, every Latin American country has stated its position, which has been very clear and highly enriching for inter-American relations. For example, we are very pleased with the statements made yesterday by the Peruvian and Colombian presidents regarding the principle of independence and how Panama's struggle for independence is a Latin American cause. All those formulas and expressions in one way or another reflect Latin American responses.

Government Sends Protest of U.S. Actions to UN

PA2704184988 Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1730 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Report by Dora Ortuno Leclerc from UN offices in New York]

[Text] The Panamanian Government has sent a letter with attachments to the UN secretary general to report the extremely serious actions that have been carried out by the U.S. Government against the Republic of Panama during the last few weeks. The letter states that these actions violate UN Charter principles and rules as well as international laws, posing a threat to international peace and security.

The letter describes the threat to use force and to prepare an invasion. Its bulky attachments, which comprise some 200 pages, contain descriptions, charts, and correspondence regarding essential aspects of Panama's crisis and the dangers it entails.

L.A. Countries Pledge Oil, Financial Assistance

PA2704154088 Panama City MATUTINO in Spanish 27 Apr 88 p 5

[Text] Latin American solidarity has become evident once more. During the last few hours the Mexican, Venezuelan, and Ecuadoran Governments have annnounced that they will guarantee the supply of oil to Panama in order to help it emerge from the crisis resulting from the criminal U.S. sanctions against it.

MATUTINO has learned from a source close to the Solis Palma administration that, abiding by the resolution adopted by SELA at its latest special session in Caracas, Mexico will supply oil and other priority items required by Panama.

In addition, based on a recommendation from OLADE, yesterday Venezuela announced that it will continue shipping oil to Panama without demanding compliance with the usual administrative procedures to pay for the shipments.

A similar step is expected to be adopted by Ecuador during the next few hours with regard to the supply of this important basic product that we need to keep our industrial and transportation infrastructure in operation.

Moreover, it has been learned that an important mechanism will be set in motion through the Andean Reserve Fund to make payments resulting from clearinghouse transactions among official and private banks possible.

The agreement, which is expected to be concluded next week, is extremely important for a gradual and limited resumption of operations by the national banking system.

New Commander of Military Engineers Battalion
PA2704202388 Panama City Domestic Service in Spanish 1645 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Major Luis Ruiz Valdes assumed command of the Military Engineers Battalion [Batallon de Ingenieria Militar, BIM]. This battalion is the spearhead of our military institution, because our mission is to secure peace in our territory by conducting medical tours and building roads in inaccessible areas, Colonel Alberto Purcell, deputy Air Force chief, Panama Defense Forces [FDP] General Staff, stated as he presided over the transfer of power ceremony of the aforementioned battalion.

During the ceremony, Lieutenant Colonel Virgilio Mirones, outgoing BIM commander, transferred command to Major Luis Ruiz Valdes, the new battalion commander. Col Purcell said that the mission of the BIM is to ensure that the people can live peacefully so that businessmen will know that the Armed Forces support them, because this country will serve as an example for Latin America.

For his part, Lieutenant Colonel Virgilio Mirones, G-5 of the General Staff, thanked the command for the promotion and the confidence placed in him. You can rest assured that I will not betray the office, the commander, or the General Staff, the ranking officer stated. Asking the members of the battalion to give their utmost cooperation to Maj Ruiz Valdes, Lt Col Mirones said that the work that they carry out benefits many humble communities of our territory who have the right to live a decent and productive life.

Maj Luis Ruiz Valdes concluded by stating that their working agenda falls within the parameters of discipline, responsibility, honor, and loyalty. He said that he was proud to assume command of such select officers, noncommissioned officers, and troops.

International Labor Leaders Visit Noriega
PA2704124588 Panama City Televisora Nacional in Spanish 0000 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Today leaders of trade and labor unions representing 214 million workers throughout the world met with General Manuel Antonio Noriega, Panama Defense Forces [FDP] commander.

Among the visitors were labor leaders from the WFTU, headquartered in Prague, and from Cuba and the Soviet Union. Venezuelan Councilman Luis Murillo Baez and Francisco Fernandez, member of the Latin American Trade Union Group's Permanent Council, were also in the delegation. The labor leaders expressed the solidarity of the millions of workers they represent with Gen Noriega and the FDP.

The visitors were accompanied by Jose Manuel Meneses from the CNTP [National Central Organization of Panamanian Workers]. They are here to attend the conference of solidarity with Panama.

Argentina

Alfonsin Departs for Visit to Colombia

PY271526 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 1327 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 27 Apr (TELAM)—Just before departing for Colombia, President Raul Alfonsin stated at Ezeiza International Airport that he hopes expectations are filled by his speech opening the ordinary session of Congress on 1 May.

He also referred to the announcement by government spokesman Jose Ignacio Lopez of a radio and television draft law, indicating that this is an important topic, and it will be a good thing if it is throughly debated throughout Argentina.

He said he will try to expand bilateral trade with Colombia, and that the answer to the problems of discrimination in international trade being suffered by Latin American countries is for the countries to promote their own foreign trade.

Referring to the fight against drug trafficking, he stated that Argentina has decided to change jurisdictions in order to fight drug trafficking, and he said that he himself will preside over the committee. [sentence as received]

The chief of state said that the fight against drug trafficking will be one of the topics he will discuss with Colombian President Virgilio Barco. They will also discuss bilateral economic relations, the Latin American situation, and other universal topics.

Caputo Denies Hostilities Halt Statement

PY272154 Buenos Aires NOTICIAS ARGENTINAS in Spanish 2025 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Bogota, 27 Apr (NA)—Today Foreign Minister Dante Caputo reaffirmed that "a de jure declaration of cessation of hostilities with the United Kingdom is not justified because there has never been a formal declaration of hostilities." He thereby denied reports regarding an imminent decision in this regard.

Caputo, who is accompaying President Raul Alfonsin in his visit to Colombia, added that "the Foreign Ministry's position on this matter is invariable, and it has been reaffirmed in public government communiques."

In remarks he made to reporters before his arrival in Bogota, the foreign minister considered "surprising this phenomenon of collective resonance, by which someone starts saying that we are going to declare a cessation of hostilities and everyone begins repeating the same thing, although the government and the Foreign Ministry say just the opposite."

The foreign minister stated that Senator Gass' recent remarks "are in strict line with the spirit of the Foreign Ministry's repeated communiques."

Caputo said that the Argentine position is that "there is no need for a de jure cessation of hostilities, but that if Great Britain thinks that this is the ultimate obstacle on the path to a broad and unrestricted negotiation, without preconditions, Argentina is willing to declare it."

He said: "This was our position last year, in 1986, and in 1985. We have been saying the same thing for the past 3 years. There has been no change in this regard."

Caputo added that Argentina feels that "there have been other cases involving the United Kingdon itself where a cessation of hostilities was not declared."

Thus, he recalled the case of the Suez Canal conflict, when Egypt, invaded by Great Britain, demanded "on several occasions a declaration of cessation of hostilities, without receiving a positive response."

Thus, Caputo stated, "since there is no change in the British position, there is no change in the Argentine position."

Defense Secretary on Falklands, Panama

PY271411 Buenos Aires NOTICIAS ARGENTINAS in Spanish 1142 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 27 Apr (NA)—Today Defense Secretary Raul Alconada Sempe confirmed that he will leave his current post to take over as secretary for special affairs at the Foreign Ministry. He denied that his return to the Foreign Ministry "is due to a hypothetical cease-fire declaration in the Malvinas conflict."

In remarks to Radio Continental, Alconada Sempe made it clear that he will work under the orders of Deputy Foreign Minister Susana Ruiz Cerruti, and he denied that Argentina is prepared to carry out "actions" to achieve the ouster of Panama's General Manuel Noriega.

In 1987 Alconada Sempe resigned from the Foreign Ministry's Latin American affairs under secretariat after the Easter week crisis.

Alconada Sempe, who is a member of the UCR's Buenos Aires National Coordinating Board, which is headed by national Deputy Federico Storani, stated that in his new post he "will be charged with the matters, which because of their urgency, the normal organization of the Foreign Ministry cannot manage."

Hugo Gobbi, the current Argentine ambassador to Spain, held the post of under secretary for special affairs when the Radicals assumed power. Jorge Sabato, the current education minister, took over that post from Gobbi.

Before he was named minister after the 1987 elections, Sabato replaced Elsa Kelly in the International Relations and Worship Secretariat when Kelly left the Foreign Ministry.

After stating that he had not participated in last week's meetings between high-ranking members of the U.S. State Department and Argentine authorities, Alconada Sempe stressed that Argentina's position regarding the Panamanian conflict "is to reaffirm the principles of nonintervention and noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries."

Moreover, he stressed that "our hope is for Latin American democracies to become more open" and for the authorities of a country "to be elected by the people and not through the power of corporations," obviously referring to the recent naming of Manuel Solis Palma as Panamanian president.

Asked about reports that yesterday U.S. Ambassador Theodore Gildred asked Foreign Minister Dante Caputo for Argentina's intervention in the Panamanian crisis, Alconada Sempe said: "I have read a cable containing the ambassador's assertion that he did not say that."

Asked if President Raul Alfonsin will announce on Sunday the "de jure" end of hostilities in the South Atlantic conflict, Sempe said: "That is not the case."

Sempe also denied reports "linking" his return to the Foreign Ministry after just over 1 year to the declaration of an end of hostilities in the 1982 war.

Regarding comments that the United States will resume arms sales to Argentina after a gesture such as this, Sempe said: "The United States wants an end of hostilities and the reestablishment of relations with Great Britain." "However," he added, "we will not reestablish relations if the talks do not include the issue of sovereignty."

Asked if Argentina would agree to intervene in the Panamanian conflict, Sempe reiterated that "this is not possible because we signed the UN Charter and we support the principle of nonintervention."

He also doubted the "Group of Eight," of which Argentina is a member, would initiate any mediation in the Panamanian conflict because "this is not a crisis among nations, as was the Central American crisis."

Sempe concluded by saying that Argentina could "cooperate with the Panamanian democratic forces" to clarify the situation of the country's government.

Arrest of Former President, Ministers Ordered

PY272048 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 1738 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 27 Apr (Telam)—Judge Martin Irurzum has signed a decree ordering the preventive imprisonment of former [President] Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, former Economy Minister Jose Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, and former Interior Minister General Albano Eduardo Harguindeguy on charges of aggravated unlawful deprivation of freedom and attempted extortion. The judge has also ordered an embargo of the former ministers' assets for 600,000 and 400,000 australes each, respectively.

It has been learned that Martinez de Hoz has been in custody since 1400 today at the Federal Police Central Department, while Harguindeguy's whereabouts are unknown.

Videla is charged with the unlawful deprivation of the freedom of businessman Federico Guthein and his son Marcelo. The two former ministers are also involved in the same crime.

Arrest Confirmed

PY272139 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 2027 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 27 Apr (TELAM)—Judge Martin Irurzum reported at 1625 that the Defense Ministry has confirmed the arrest of General Eduardo Harguindeguy, retired.

This afternoon Harguindeguy will be taken to Judge Irurzum's office in the court building. Former Economy Minister Jose Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, who is charged with unlawful deprivation of freedom, is already at the court.

Governor Cafiero Meets With Soviet Ambassador

PY271443 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 0431 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] La Plata, 26 Apr (TELAM)—Buenos Aires Governor Antonio Cafiero has received Soviet Ambassador Oleg Kvasov in a special audience.

According to the provincial press directorate, durign the meeting, which was also attended by Alieto Guadagni, provincial public works and service minister, Cafiero and Kvasov discussed the possibility of seriously looking into the signing of bilateral agreement between the Soviet Union and Buenos Aires Province.

At the end of the meeting, Ambassador Kvasov said: In the first place, my visit to Cafiero is of a protocol nature, since the Soviet Union and Argentina have already signed some cooperation agreements, especially in the energy field.

The subject of the struggle against the floods was also mentioned. In this regard the ambassador said that Soviet specialists have already made some recommendations to Buenos Aires Province authorities. Kvasov concluded by stating that during the meeting he stressed his government's desire to seek new ways to increase cooperation.

CNEA Leader on Nuclear Construction Delays

PY271821 Buenos Aires TELAM in Spanish 1155 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Buenos Aires, 27 Apr (TELAM)—Emma Perez Ferreyra, the National Commission for Atomic Energy (CNEA) chairperson, has stated that it is becoming very difficult to finish large undertakings, such as the Atucha II plant, which will generate nuclear electricity. She warned that if the Atucha II plant is not finished on time, consumers will not be able to use the 745 megawatts that this plant is designed to produce and thus the national electricity demand will not be met.

Perez Ferreyra added that the Atucha II plant should have been in operation by June 1987. The nuclear plan is at a crossroad: It either continues, or it will fail because if we are unable to finish Atucha II, it is senseless to finish the heavy water plant.

Although she denied that the construction of the nuclear plant has stopped, she said it is being carried out inefficiently because when resources are not freely available, there cannot be any efficiency.

Perez Ferreyra asserted that the CNEA had requested $700 million in its 1988 budget, which had been previously approved by the finance secretary and is now awaiting congressional approval. She explained that if the works are to be finished, Atucha II will need $1 billion and the heavy water plant will need $150 million.

In a statement to newspaper "EL CRONISTA COMERCIAL," Perez Ferreyra said that in keeping with an Argentine decision, we are building a heavy water plant to ensure an independent supply of essential operational supplies for a nuclear power plant which uses natural uranium and heavy water.

Asked about CNEA salaries, she said that a scientist with many years of experience earns 3,000 australes and a newly-recruited scientist earns 1,800 australes. She added that private companies pay double that amount and that a scientist of the same level earns more than double at some state-run companies, such as the Water and Energy Company, and that this is why they leave the CNEA.

Briefs

GDP Increases in 1987

Buenos Aires, 25 April (DYN)—The Economy Ministry has reported that in 1987 the GDP increased by 1.6 percent over the 1986 figure. [Summary] [*PY270342 Buenos Aires DYN in Spanish 2104 GMT 25 Apr 88*]

Bolivia

Interior Minister Scores COB's Hunger Strike

PY271429 La Paz La Red Panamericana in Spanish 1130 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Excerpts] Interior Minister Juan Carlos Duran has said that the government will not allow an attack against the country's democratic system or the disruption of peace and order.

The minister said the executive branch will not allow an attack against the democratic system currently in force in Bolivia and that the state security forces are determined to safeguard order by abiding by the Constitution.

Minister Duran said the union leaders have declared a hunger strike without taking into account a number of factors related to the current situation, and that their attitude by no means helps to solve the problems affecting Bolivia.

Duran recalled that on various occasions the government had proposed an open dialogue to the COB as a means of reaching an agreement to solve the national problems.

The minister then said he does not believe in hunger strikes like the one being carried out by the COB leaders and that the Bolivian community repudiates this action. [passage omitted] In the next few hours the Interior Ministry will start a series of legal proceedings against the COB leaders and other persons who are fasting.

Interior Ministry Under Secretary Eduardo Perez Beltran asserted that the judicial authorities will assume their responsibilities of safeguarding the law and punishing those who violate it.

The government regards the hunger strike called by the COB as illegal and, therefore, it should be punished by the laws currently in force.

Briefs

Fuel Barter With Argentina

La Paz, 24 Apr (EFE)—Bolivian Foreign Minister Guillermo Bedregal has confirmed that Bolivia will barter diesel oil for gasoline with Argentina to solve its internal fuel deficit in 1988. Bedregal said that "the barter of heavy hydrocarbons for light ones" with Argentina will fulfill Bolivia's internal demand of gasoline, which reaches to 372,300 barrels per year. Bolivia only produces 185,300 barrels per year. [Summary] [*PY270343 Madrid EFE in Spanish 0300 GMT 25 Apr 88*]

Brazil

Fire on Oil Platform Causes Production Halt

PY270322 Rio de Janeiro O GLOBO in Portuguese 26 Apr 88 p 1

[Text] Petrobras will spend more than $1 million (131 million cruzados) to import 60,000 barrels of oil a day to compensate for the interruption in the Enchova oil platform production, due to a fire that started there on the afternoon of 24 April. The fire will continue for at least 10 days, when effective operations to extinguish it will start. If all attempts to extinguish the fire fail, it may continue to burn for as long as 8 months, until all the reserves of gas end.

Although there have been no casualties, Wagner Freire, Petrobras director of production and prospecting, believes this accident will cause more losses than any other in Brazilian history. In another accident at Enchova on 16 August 1986, an explosion killed 37 workers and injured 42.

Petrobras has two possibilities of extinguishing this fire. One is to use dynamite to burn out the oxygen around the fire through an explosion. The other is to drill a well near the platform to inject fluids to stop the flow of gas. Petrobras has asked for the assistance of the U.S. Red Adair Oil Well Fires and Blockouts Control Co., which is the most famous company in the world in extinguishing oil platform fires.

Briefs

Industrial Production Decreases

The production of the Brazilian manufacturing sector decreased by 9 percent in January 1988 compared to January 1987, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics has reported. Production has decreased mostly in the sectors of plastics, clothes, medicine, electrical materials, communications, mechanics, and textiles. [Summary] [*PY270347 Sao Paulo FOLHA DE SAO PAULO in Portuguese 26 Apr 88 p A-25*]

Chile

Pinochet Comments on 'New Role' of Armed Forces

PY271422 Santiago Domestic Service in Spanish 1030 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] President Pinochet has said that from now on the Armed Forces and forces of order will play an important new role in national activities. The president said: It is not our intention to control civilian activities, as politicians have repeatedly warned. The idea is to join the Armed Forces and the forces of order into a single unit with the sole intention of serving national interests.

President Pinochet said that under the present government, the Armed Forces and forces of order have recovered their dignity because the Armed Forces have become a truly professional organization. Moreover, we have granted them greater resources with which to exercise their duty and improve their standard of living.

Pinoche added: The future looks promising because we have established an armed forces that can develop resources through flourishing military industries.

Speaking before retired high-ranking military officers who were meeting at La Moneda Palace, Pinochet reasserted that Chileans will soon confront a great challenge. He said: We either put our country on the path of development or we step back to a past filled with failure, backwardness, and uncertainty. The final decision will be made by all Chileans.

Air Force Commander on Pinochet Statements

PY272034 Santiago Radio Chilena Network in Spanish 1700 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Report by Eliana Enriquez from Government House]

[Text] The commanders in chief will not yield to pressure, General Fernando Matthei has said, adding that General Pinochet would never try to pressure us either. Gen Matthei said this when asked about the president's statement that the 1980 Constitution established that at the end of 8 years, the citizens should decide whether or not he should continue in power. When it was suggested that political sector have interpreted that statement as pressure on the commanders in chief, Gen Matthei replied:

[Begin Matthei recording] The truth is that they do not know us. They do not know that a 62-year-old man, a commander in chief of the Air Force of Chile, or of the Navy, will not permit himself to be pressured. Furthermore, they do not know that the president would never try to pressure us considering that relations among us are of absolute camaraderie and respect. Even if we are not always in agreement, the differences have always been discussed. [end recording]

Gen Matthei declined to say if the president's statement amounts to a virtual self-proclamation as candidate, as many sectors have contended. He added that each one has his own opinion about that statement.

Changing the subject, the Air Force commander said that Chileans now know what the Party for Democracy is, and who Ricardo Lagos is. With this knowledge, Matthei said that they should know what to do. He then added that the insults proffered by those political leaders make no impact on the Armed Forces. Continuing to talk about the members of the Party for Democracy, Matthei

said that those people are not democratic, but totalitarian. He then said that the country must know that Ricardo Lagos is the succesor of the Popular Unity and the Salvador Allende government.

Lastly, Gen Matthei expressed his opinion that if that is the socialism some sectors want, they can have it. They are free to vote no in the plebiscite.

Socialist Leader Scores Pinochet's Record
PY271343 Madrid EFE in Spanish 2222 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] Santiago, 26 Apr (EFE)—Socialist leader Ricardo Lagos, president of the Party for Democracy (PPD), has demanded that Chilean President General Augusto Pinochet clearly define his position regarding the upcoming plebiscite.

Lagos said during a television program transmitted by the Catholic University Television Network that Gen Pinochet has not been sincere with the country because he has made promises that he did not fulfill.

Despite a reporter's attempt to interrupt him twice, Lagos demanded the right to speak "because after 15 years of silence the country must understand it is facing an important decision."

Lagos, staring at the camera and showing various 1980 newspaper cuttings, said: "You, Gen Pinochet, said that you would not be a candidate, but the country is now confronted with the imminent fact of 8 more years of autoritarianism, torture, and murder. This is incredible, but you will have to answer in the yes or no vote."

According to the 1981 Constitution promulgated by Pinochet, the Armed Forces will submit to a plebiscite their candidate for president for the 1989-1997 period. Only if a majority of Chileans vote "no" in the plebiscite will there be direct elections in 1990.

Lagos said that the PPD is only an "instrument" to deal with the plebiscite with the sole purpose of "reestablishing democracy in Chile and putting an end to the dictatorship."

Radical Party leader Jorge Schaulsson, also representing the PPD; right-wing Republican Party leader Armando Jaramillo; and young Socialist Party leader Carolina Toha, daughter of the late Jose Toha, former defense minister during Allende's administration and a journalist, also participated in the program.

Bolivian Comments on ECLA Office 'Insults'
PY272124 Santiago Domestic Service in Spanish 1700 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Excerpt] Uldaricio Rigueroa, the Foreign Ministry's multilateral policy director, said that Bolivia's continuous accusations regarding the ECLA headquarters in Chile are groundless insults and constitute an irresponsible misrepresentation of the facts. Bolivia has accused Chile of committing a series of irregularities regarding ECLA and repeatedly requested moving its headquarters from Chile.

Figueroa thus answered the Bolivian delegate's accusations at the 22nd ECLA plenary session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. [passage omitted]

Carabineros Arrest 'Dangerous Extremist'
PY270229 Santiago Domestic Service in Spanish 2300 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] The carabineros have placed at the disposal of the military courts a dangerous extremist, identified as Yuri German Tabilo Jara, 25, who has participated in at least 20 subversive attacks.

According to the carabineros report, Tabilo, 25, began his terrorist activities as a member of the People's Power Program in La Victoria district. He was trained at the Punto Cero guerrilla warfare training camp in Cuba.

Afterward, Tabilo joined a Revolutionary Movement of the Left (MIR) cell that operated in downtown Santiago. On 8 March 1987, the MIR cell was involved in a 4-million peso robbery. The cell was also involved in the 18 September clearinghouse robbery. On 11 March 1987 the cell, which in this case included 8 people, robbed 4 million pesos in cash and 60 million pesos in checks and securities. On 10 September 1987, the MIR cell was involved in the attack against Carabineros van No Z404 at the intersection of Club Hipico and Departmental Streets, in which Carabineros Mario Martinez Vargas and Ramon Bahamondes were killed. On 16 September 1987, the cell attacked the Jose Maria Caro branch office of the Bank of Chile, injuring a security guard and seizing an Uzi submachinegun and two revolvers from the Carabineros who were on duty at the branch office.

In 1987, Tabilo joined a subversive group that attacked the Veronica shoemaking factory and the facilities of the (Cerrillos y Melco) textile company. On 29 February 1988, Tabilo was involved in the attack against the Japon School, in which three people were killed and five were injured.

The extremist was reportedly involved in several attacks currently being investigated by the police. It has also been reported that Tabilo Jara was involved in at least four firebomb attacks against buses and in a great number of bombings against street posts, rail tracks, and high-tension towers.

In sum, the extremist detained by the 10th Carabinero Precinct is involved in more than 20 terrorist attacks.

Briefs

Trade Balance Surplus

The trade balance registered a surplus of approximately $572 million in the first quarter of 1988. This amount is considerably higher than that of the first quarter of 1987, when it reached $184 million. The unemployment rate has decrased and the authorities have reported that real salaries will experience a significant increase. [Summary] [*PY272040 Santiago EL MERCURIO in Spanish 16 Apr 88 p B1*]

Colombia

Argentine President Arrives on Official Visit

PA2704201088 Paris AFP in Spanish 1928 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Bogota, 27 Apr (AFP)—Argentine President Raul Alfonsin arrived at 1915 GMT in Bogota for an official 3-day visit to Colombia aimed at strengthening bilateral relations.

The president was received at Catam Military Airport by Colombian Foreign Minister Julio Londono, with whom he left for Narino Palace, in downtown Bogota, to meet with President Virgilio Barco.

Tomorrow, Alfonsin and Barco are to sign several cooperation agreements.

People Occupy UN Offices, Denounce 'Dirty War'

PA2704181388 Bogota Inravision Television Cadena 1 in Spanish 1737 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Report by Carlos Mario Diaz]

[Text] Approximately 30 persons, including 7 women and 5 children, have just occupied the UN offices in Bogota.

[Begin recording] [Speaker] I was sitting in my car when I saw the bus drive up. I saw several people get off, including women and children, and enter the UN offices. They never said a word.

[Diaz] Were they silent?

[Speaker] Yes, they said nothing.

[Diaz] How many people entered the building?

[Speaker] Approximately 25 or 30 people. [end recording]

The group is demanding the presence of Attorney General Horacio Serpa Uribe, Patriotic Union President Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa, Human Rights Commission President Jose Alberto Carrizosa, as well as FECODE [Colombian Federation of Teachers] and SINTAGRO [expansion unknown] representatives. The group has denounced the crimes being committed and is demanding justice.

A few minutes ago the group released the following communique:

We call on the nation and international community to witness the dirty war being waged in Colombia. This dirty war is shown by the arbitrary arrest and disappearance of popular and political leaders and human rights defenders, and the massacre of peasants and workers.

10 Hostages Released

PA2804012988 Bogota Inravision Television Cadena 1 in Spanish 0000 GMT 28 Apr 88

[Excerpts] This is a last-minute news: Ten hostages were just released at the UN offices. All the released people are women, and there are still 40 people inside.

[Begin reporter recording] These are pictures of the release of 10 hostages at 1800. Colombian women working at the UN offices were allowed to leave. [passage omitted]

A fourth communique was issued. It states that the release of the others depends on the signing of a document admitting that there are people missing in Colombia for political reasons; it calls on the United Nations to mediate in problems involving human rights violations; and it demands that the Amnesty International study be taken into consideration. It wants security organizations to report on the whereabouts of Jaime Bermeo, Benjamin Munoz, and Fernando Herazo and his wife, who are M-19 members.

The communique also calls for the publication of the results of investigations into the Uraba massacre, involvement of popular sectors in actions of the Attorney General's Office, and the creation of a common front against violence in Colombia. [end recording]

Violence Leaves 43 Dead in Various Incidents

PA2704151188 Bogota Emisoras Caracol Network in Spanish 1215 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Bogota—Forty-three dead, among them three members of the Armed Forces and numerous Indians, is the partial result of the violence striking the country, particularly in Cesar Department.

Today authorities are investigating a massacre that took place in Nuevo Colon, Valledupar jurisdiction, near the snow-covered Santa Marta mountain range, where presumed ELN [National Liberation Army] guerrillas killed 10 men, including peasants and Indians. Also in Cesar Department, the bodies of eight Indians were discovered in the rural area of (Guatepuri) and on the banks of the (Guatepuri) River.

Thirteen guerrillas, including two women, were killed as a result of counterinsurgency operations during the past few days in the Santa Marta area, San Martin sector, in the southern part of Cesar Department bordering with Santander. Two soldiers were killed during those clashes, while two others—Hipolito Ramirez and Rafael Padilla—were wounded and had to be transferred to a hospital in Bucaramanga.

In (Mariangola) municipality, also in Cesar Department, presumed ELN guerrillas attacked several farms and, after stealing several million pesos, they killed Manuel Medina Mejia, the administrator. Meanwhile, in (Cajiro) jurisdiction, Cauca Department, unidentified men killed Patriotic Union leader Jose Omar Henao and peasants Nivardo Achahua and Martin Villa.

In Caqueta Department, FARC guerrillas killed peasants Lider Rodriguez, Domingo Rojas Alvarez, and Maria Dolores Guzman. In Bucaramanga, gunmen killed merchants Gregorio Blanco Castillo and German Pena.

Guerrillas blew up a train near Barrancabermeja, causing extensive property damage and wounding one of the operators.

Meanwhile, in Bogota, members of a Metropolitan Police patrol were attacked while on a routine mission. As a result of the shootout, which took place in the Modelo neighborhood in the northwestern part of the city, First Corporal Jaime Manuel Duarte was killed and Police agent [name indistinct] was wounded. One of the criminals, who was wounded, was arrested.

Paraguay

Foreign Minister on Vernon Walters' Visit

PY271903 Asuncion PATRIA in Spanish
27 Apr 88 p 6

[Text] "It was a very important visit because he is the U.S. representative to the United Nations, he holds an important post within the U.S. Government. He is member of the Security Council, and he attends the cabinet meetings of the U.S. President, that is, President Reagan." This was the reply given by Paraguayan Foreign Minister Carlos A. Saldivar yesterday when asked about the recent visit to Paraguay by General Vernon Walters, retired.

He added: "The opinion of Gen Vernon Walters, who we all know is an old friend of our country—a man with deep beliefs which he demonstrates in his daily struggle to defend Western values at the United Nations in the permanent struggle agaisnt the Marxist world which wishes to subbdue us." [sentence as published]

"He maintains a position, and his opinions must be understood. Ambassador Walters' opinion is of great value and evidently deserves resepct. I do not want to make comparisons, but his opinion is more valueable than others made at secondary levels of the U.S. State Department. Ambassador Walters' opinion should serve us as a guide as to how we stand in the international scene and reflects our bilateral relations with the United States," Saldivar said.

He added: "He has clearly said that our relations with the United States 'are not all that bad,' and he should know abou this because he is permanently informed about our bilateral relations. In the last two UN assemblies I held a private meeting with Ambassador Walters, and I told him of our opinion about our relations and about Paraguayan reality."

Minister Saldivar said: "Walters came here to see the situation for himself, and his opinions—despite the reactions of the irregular sector—represent an important stance of the U.S. Government."

Retired General Returns After 26-Year Exile

PY280200 Asuncion ULTIMA HORA in Spanish
27 Apr 88 p 9

[Excerpts] This morning General Carlos Montanaro, retired, a former military leader and diplomat, who was an outstanding figure in politics and the military in the 1940's and 1950's, returned to the country after 26 years of exile in Venezuela and the United States. [passage omitted]

Gen Montanaro, who was carrying out his duties as Paraguayan ambassador to Venezuela in 1959, was taken aback by the political events of May of that year. In the wake of those events, Montanaro submitted his irrevocable resignation from his post and began his long exile in Caracas.

He later traveled to the United States, where he is currently living with his family. Some of his sons have university degrees and hold executive positions at banking institutions.

Montanaro, a MOPOCO supporter, is currently the honorary president of the MOPOCO convergence faction.

According to his records, Montanaro was a former chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board, director of the Military School in 1948, and headed the rebellion that ousted former President General Higinio Morinigo.

Peru Protest of Abrams' Comments Viewed

PY280210 Asuncion PATRIA in Spanish
27 Apr 88 p 7

[Editorial: "Another by Elliott Abrams"]

[Text] It has been said that Elliott Abrams, U.S. assistant secretary of State for inter-American affairs, would be appointed U.S. ambassador to one of our neighboring countries. However, given his background he should appointed to another planet rather than to our subcontinent.

We are no longer referring to his relations with the antidemocratic opposition agitators of our country or to his "chitchats" with the plotters who are opposed to our multiparty system and electoral participatory system. Those plotters always go to Washington to "vomit" their slanders, machinations, and defamations into the attentive ears of those who listen to them in that department, namely Mr Abrams. Subversives like "Tovarich" Laino or the "Portenos" [residents of Buenos Aires] Abdon and Hermes Saguier boastfully and defiantly comment on their talks with U.S. officials upon their return to our country. Laino and the Saguier brothers are members of a group that advocates abstentionism within the "authentic" faction of the PLR [Radical Liberal Party]. Those people oppose the PLR as fiercely as they oppose the Colorado Party, constitutional order, and a system that promotes an active civic struggle through periodical multiparty elections.

We are not referring here to the more or less suppressed irritation caused in Latin American countries by Abrams' remarks on exclusively domestic matters of each respective country, or to his one-sided view of the drug trade that overlooks fundamental aspects such as a market that goes from coast to coast and the amount of dollars involved in the drug trade. We are referring here to a stiff warning given to Mr Abrams by the Alan Garcia administration when he questioned the democratic stability of Peru.

According to an EFE report datelined Lima, 23 [April], "the Peruvian Government has protested to the U.S. Government concerning the statements made by Elliott Abrams, U.S. assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, who said that there is a coup threat in Peru."

The report states that Abrams words were "categorically rejected." Therefore, "explanations were requested from Washington through its embassy in Lima." The report added: "The Alan Garcia government considers Abrams' statements to be wrongful and an inadmissilble intereference in Peruvian affairs." Mr Abrams made his statement during a recent visit to Buenos Aires. There he met with spokesmen of the Paraguayan irregular sector, as learned through "Tovarich" Laino's explanation of his lightning trip to Buenos Aires. Abrams' statements caused indignation "and rejection by the Peruvian political forces."

Therefore, it is not "the official sector that was annoyed," as is said jokingly when a fact bothers the authorities. His statements were characterized by the public as "intervention," since they were made in a third country he was visiting about the domestic problems of another country.

As is well known, Peru is sailing through choppy waters, whipped up by the struggle against the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Marxist guerrillas, the fight against drug trafficking, and, more specifically, by the political struggle among the various political parties. This political struggle is inherent in a democracy, and it becomes more acute when problems worsen. Despite this, however, an authorized opposition spokesman, Senator Carlos Mainica from the United Left coalition, categorically stated that "no civilian sector is inciting a coup," and he added that "militagy uprisings have (always) been promoted by civilian groups who prodded the military."

As can happen anywhere, some voices in Peru are saying that Abrams' statement in Buenos Aires is a warning to the Alan Garcia government to change its course. But the majority who democratically support that government have a different opinion. The APRA leader in the Chamber of Deputies, Luis Alvarado Contreras, commenting ironically on Abrams' statement, has said, according to the EFE dispatch, "the North Americans may have been confused when they heard Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa requesting that they intervene in South American countries, and though they were also asked to intervene in Peru." Ironically or not, the truth is that such comments are pertinent whenever the obsolete "big stick policy" is alluded to. And so we said when we commented on Vargas Llosa's unfortunate statement at the time.

But our subject now is Mr Elliott Abrams, whose Latin American "curriculum" is being "enriched" in the way the crab walks—backwards. And should he continue to talk about other countries, we should not be surprised if he gets more "traffic tickets," considering his outstanding aptitute in going the wrong way. Even obtaining an "agreement" from a host country for his appointment to some embassy might turn out to be problematic.

Central Bank President on World Bank Mission

PY271837 Asuncion HOY in Spanish 27 Apr 88 p 11

[Excerpt] Asked whether the World Bank mission that has just visited our country came to make impositions of a monetary or a financial nature on national authorities, Central Bank President Cesar Romeo Acosta has said: "The World Bank does not want to impose anything, and of course Paraguay would not accept any impositions because it is an independent country."

He asserted: "The World Bank may suggest, advise, but it cannot make impositions. This year, the World Bank mission did not visit us for this reason. This was a routine visit to countries in the region. From Paraguay, it went to Uruguay, and from there it was scheduled to visit Bolivia. World Bank officials make periodic visits. The mission did not come with the intention of imposing anything on Paraguay and, of course, Paraguay would not accept impositions from anyone. We have been an independent country since 1811, and we continue to struggle for our independence and our freedom."

He added that Paraguay "is a country that has sufficient conditions and historical background to make ourselves be respected as an independent and free country. There are rumors stating that the World Bank mission visited

us to make impositions. The government will not accept this because the government, headed by President Stroessner, is a patriotic government that will defend the freedom and independence of our country. It will not subject itself to anyone."

Acosta explained the World Bank mission "visited our country to verify data it receives from other organizations, such as ECLA, on Paraguay. It visited our country to compare this data with that available here so that they may take with them precise information on everything concerning the Paraguay economy. It is a routine procedure."

Asked if the World Bank mission made any suggestions about the Paraguayan economic policy, Acosta said: "absolutely nothing." [passage omitted]

Peru

Economy Minister on First Quarter Growth Rates

PY271509 Lima Domestic Service in Spanish 1200 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] The Peruvian economy grew by 3.6 percent during the 1st 3 months of the current year in comparison with the same period last year, Finance and Economy Minister Gustavo Saberbein has said.

During a questioning session in Congress yesterday, the minister also said that during the 1st quarter of the year the farming sector grew by 6.4 percent, the fishing sector by 6.7 percent, the construction sector 11.4 percent, and the manufacturing sector by 7.2 percent.

To those who criticized the economic policy for the inflation rate of March, Saberbein said that salaries hit a record increase, reflected in the 60-percent rise in the legal minimum wage.

Peru has never before seen such a large increase in the minimum wage, or a 45-percent wage increase for teachers and a 40-percent wage increase for public sector professionals, he said.

Inflation, he stated, is demonstrating how we have passed from a stage of general growth to a stage of selective growth in the economy. Inflation reflects the correction of some problems which are common when an economy grows, he said.

Suriname

Military, Civilian Police Dispute Jurisdiction

FL2204141588 Bonaire Trans World Radio in English 1130 GMT 22 Apr 88

[Text] A dispute between the Surinamese military and civilian police is causing concern in the government. The dispute is apparently over a question of jurisdiction. Commander (Badre Saint Sito), member of the Surinamese Military Council, criticized the police yesterday for publicizing the dispute. Police Chief (Paul Manso) met with Vice President Henck Arron on Wednesday to protest because the police were not permitted to investigate some soldiers who are suspected of taking part in disruptive incidents during the recent visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek.

Police Begin Work Slowdown

FL2604163988 Bonaire Trans World Radio in English 1130 GMT 26 Apr 88

[Text] Surinamese police began a nation-wide work slowdown yesterday to protest interference that they've been experiencing as they try to investigate crimes that allegedly were committed by soldiers.

Police say they've reported to their stations but are responding only to emergencies.

The police say they've received death threats and other attempts to stymie investigations, particularly one in which arson attacks occurred during the visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek.

The Army investigations present one of the major problems facing the 3-month old civilian government in Suriname.

Strike Ends

FL2704135588 Bonaire Trans World Radio in English 1130 GMT 27 Apr 88

[Text] Police in Suriname have ended a 5-day strike called to protest what they said were threats from elements of the military. The strike was called off following a meeting between the police union and top government officials.

It is not clear if the government has met the demands of the police union.

Last week the union charged that the Surinamese Army prevented police detectives from questioning several soldiers who were suspected of involvement in a series of recent bombings in Paramaribo, especially during the visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek.